

Wild Youth (reckless) by dumbledore_93

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Summary:

"He looks really bad," Dustin croaks. "There's a lot of blood."

Mike steps over cautiously. There is a lot of blood.

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or: the kids attempt to help an injured steve in the aftermath of billy's attack. things get a little stressful.

(missing scene)

Wild Youth (reckless)

Author's Note:

wheweeeee i just had to write a scene where the kids stuck plasters on steve because... seriously ???

(this is my first stranger things fic and im very sorry if i got the character's voice wrong or they seemed ooc!!! i tried)

(it was a bit of a challenge writing from all of the kid's povs but there we are)

trigger warning: vomitting, blood, concussion, just all the general pain that comes from billy beating the heck out of steve

There are some moments in Mike's life that he feels he simply wouldn't be able to explain to anyone. This is certainly one of them, as Max stares at them fiercely, a set of keys dangling from her fingers. Her brother lays unconscious on the floor.

Mike thinks she might have said something but he can't quite process what it was.

Something stupid, he imagines.

There's silence for one fine moment, where Max stares at Lucas and Lucas stares at Max and Mike can't help but stare at the prone body of Max's brother on the floor. He is huge and he was terrifying, and now he lies there like a sleeping bear. Mike is wary. He thinks Max is still standing too close to him; even unconscious, he's sure a predator like that could lash out at any minute.

Mike is about to say something about this when he's interrupted by a wet sounding moan. This is quickly followed by a high pitched squeal from his left, and he turns, taking in Dustin's terrified expression, his wide eyes, and Mike wonders why the other boy is so afraid 'cause Max just took the baddie out, when -

"Steve!"

Shit.

It comes flooding back so quickly that Mike wonders where his mind has been for the last thirty seconds - puts it down to shock, perhaps - because how could it have momentarily slipped his mind that Lucas had been attacked and Steve Harrington (of all people) had saved him, Steve had his face pumelled in, Steve was lying on the floor, probably dying. Maybe dead already.

But no, he'd made a noise hadn't he? Dustin is still standing motionless beside him, tears threatening to fall, so Mike snaps at him because it's the only thing he can think to do.

"Dustin! We have to check on him!"

Dustin jerks like he's been shot, raising his terrified gaze to Mike's for only a second before stumbling towards Steve's prone body. Mike follows, a little slower, because if Steve is dead (he's not dead, he can't be) he doesn't want to look, and Dustin is closer to Steve anyway. Steve is just his big sister's slightly annoying and often awkward boyfriend. But the way Dustin is looking at Steve now is similar to how he would look at Will when he was in the midst of a panic attack, all big eyes and worried frowns. Mike wonders how he missed Dustin becoming friends with Steve Harrington.

"Is he awake?" Mike asks hesitantly.

Dustin shrugs and crouches right by Steve's head. He shakes Steve shoulder a little but seems too afraid to touch the boy anymore than that.

"He looks really bad," Dustin croaks. "There's a lot of blood."

Mike steps over cautiously. There is a lot of blood.

"What do we do?" Dustin is gabbling suddenly, eyes wild. "What if we can't wake him up? Do we need to take him to a hospital? What would we even say? What about the others - oh God what if he -"

"Stop!" Max says suddenly, forcefully, and strides across the room.

"Let me take a look at him."

Dustin, suitably quieted, moves aside reluctantly to make way for Max. She places her hand on Steve's chest, listens carefully above his mouth and runs a gentle hand through his hair. Mike pretends not to notice that it comes away red.

She sighs. "It's just a concussion, idiots, no need to panic. He'll be fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Dustin, I know what a concussion looks like." Max rolls her eyes and the normalcy feels good. "We should get him cleaned up though."

"I'll get wet towels," Lucas offers and quickly scurries into the kitchen. He's so quiet that Mike had forgotten he was there. He wonders if the other boy feels guilty, and wonders whether, if the roles were reversed, he would feel guilty too.

(He pushes aside the thought that he already feels guilty enough. Guilty that Steve got hurt whilst protecting them and guilty that he doesn't want to have to waste time looking after him when El might be in trouble and Mike should be helping her. Guilty that he's thinking about El when Steve is on the floor, broken and bleeding and all because of them. He hopes Steve would understand. He likes to think that he would; he sure does seem to love Nancy, afterall. Maybe not as much as Mike loves El but still, a lot.)

Mike hovers for a moment uncertainly. Max has followed after Lucas, and Dustin has resumed his earlier position beside Steve.

He settles on coughing awkwardly and muttering, "I'll see if I can find some plasters."

Dustin doesn't look up as he leaves, just gently cradles Steve's head.

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Steve wakes up whilst they're washing his face.

It's gruesome really. Mike has never been good with blood, and he

knows Lucas isn't either, so they're both grimacing as they attempt to sponge down Steve's battered nose. Mike has just opened his mouth to complain, when the body underneath him jerks and Steve lurches upwards, mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. Dustin reaches for him automatically.

"Hey, hey, hey, hey, shit, shit, oh hey buddy, shit, it's okay, calm down, shit - Mike a bit of help?!"

Mike grabs Steve's shoulder and his arm and together they manage to keep him upright as he sags backwards, threatening to fall out of their grasp and back to the floor. Steve stares around the room frantically, his face pale and eyes bugging out despite the swelling around them.

He grabs Mike's hand suddenly, a desperate keening noise coming from his mouth as he begins to swallow convulsively. Mike knows what's going to happen the second before it does and has the foresight to jump out the way before Steve is violently sick all over the Byers' wooden floor.

"Shit, that's nasty!" Lucas exclaims in disgust. Steve groans miserably. From where Mike is standing he can see that most of what Steve has coughed up is blood, and even he knows that's a bad thing.

"It's okay buddy, I know, get it all out," Dustin is soothing Steve, although if the look on Steve's face is anything to go by, he doesn't seem to appreciate the back rubbing.

"Don't tell him to get it all out!" Mike cries before he can stop himself. "I don't wanna see anymore of Steve Harrington's nasty bile!"

Dustin shoots him a dirty look and resumes stroking Steve, muttering something along the lines of, "don't listen to him Stevie, he's just grumpy 'cause his girlfriend's run off again."

Mike huffs angrily. Steve lolls against Dustin, head tipped back onto the younger boy's shoulder. Dustin pats him helplessly.

"What now?"

"Keep him awake," Max says, and she sounds like she knows about

this stuff so they all listen to her.

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Dustin doesn't know why he feels so afraid. He's faced real life monsters; stared down demodogs and dealt with D'Artagnan tearing his cat to pieces. Yet for some reason, he has never felt a fear quite like the one which hits him now as he stares at Steve Harrington's bashed in face. Perhaps it is because this was caused not by monsters, but by a simple human being. Perhaps it was because Dustin watched it happen, heard the impact of fist upon flesh with every hit, and now there's blood on his hands. Perhaps it's because this is Steve, because Steve is more than a friend to him, he's more of a -

Friend? Brother? Father? What the hell is Dustin thinking.

Steve moans and Dustin remembers he has a job to do. He would never have guessed that keeping Steve awake would take so much effort, Steve who usually doesn't stop moving even when he's supposed to be stealthy, Steve who never stops talking even when he's supposed to be quiet. This Steve is different though, this Steve who can't keep his eyes open for more than a second at a time, who can barely form words, let alone sentences.

Dustin doesn't want to slap Steve, wary of causing further damage, but stroking his face just seems to send him to sleep again (not to mention stroking the face of an older boy is weird). He settles instead for a prod, insistent and annoying enough that Steve blearily opens his eyes and attempts to bat him away.

"Hey buddy, you in there?" Dustin tries, hoping Steve's glassy eyes will focus on him just for a moment.

Steve mumbles incoherently, eyelids fluttering.

"Ah crap, stay awake okay? Steve!" Dustin does slap him this time and Steve jerks.

"Be careful, man!" Lucas shouts.

Dustin shrugs off the worry, hoping it looks careless. "He's fine, aren't you Steve?"

Steve blinks at him confusedly and then says, "ow."

It's the first real word he's spoken since Billy attacked him and all four children converge on him excitedly.

"Wow, he's not brain dead-"

"Are you okay-"

"Does he remember what happened-"

"Guys!" Dustin says forcefully, because Steve is starting to look panicked, eyes darting around despite the bruises surrounding them. "Back off. Steve are you okay?"

"Dus'in..." Steve's voice is so slurred its a struggle to make out what he's saying. "Whashapen?"

"You got into an accident, Steve," he tries to make his voice as soothing as possible. The others are watching on with concern.

Steve looks like he's struggling to process something, opening and closing his mouth several times. Eventually he stutters out, "Nan?"

Dustin frowns. "Uhh," he says unsurely, wondering if he has actually lost his mind. "No... Steve, your Nan isn't here - you're at the Byers' house."

"Dustin, you idiot!" Mike pipes up from somewhere over his shoulder. "He's asking for Nancy, not his Nan."

At Nancy's name, Steve raises his head weakly, a questioning look in his eyes.

Dustin pats him carefully on the shoulder. "Sorry bro, Nancy isn't here."

At this, Steve seems to gets agitated, attempting to sit up only to find he can't support his own weight and flopping back down. Dustin catches his head just before it hits the floor.

"Where's Nance?" Steve's voice is clearer this time and Dustin takes it

for a good thing.

"She's with - uh -" Dustin flails, not wanting to upset a concussed Steve with the news that his girlfriend is off with another boy, and looks to Mike for help. Mike shrugs.

"Her parents. Nancy is with her parents," Max appears beside him and speaks calmly; Dustin admires her apparent coolness in such a dire situation. "They're having dinner together tonight."

Steve stares at Max like she holds all the answers in the world. It's a desperate kind of look, and not one that Dustin wants to see on Steve's face again. Steve is strong and brave and doesn't need to depend on anyone, especially not thirteen year olds who don't know what they're doing.

He nods though, seemingly placated, and mumbles absently to himself, speaking nonsense once more. Dustin can only hope this apparent brain damage is temporary.

"Right," Mike says. "Now he's awake, let's go."

Lucas and Max's outraged shouts mingle, an echo to Dustin's own feelings.

"Don't be such an idiot, Mike Wheeler!" Max looks furious. "You think just 'cause his eyes are open he's fit to start running round again? He can't even stand up!"

"We need to help El!"

"Damn El! Steve could be dying!" .

"He's not dying-" Dustin interrupts.

"And who's fault is that?"

"Mike!" Lucas cuts in harshly. "Shut up man, this isn't Max's fault!"

"If she hadn't joined our group and brought her asshole brother to us, we wouldn't be in this mess at all!"

Max lets out a vicious growl at that, taking a step towards Mike. Lucas grabs her shoulder pleadingly.

"Max, don't-"

"I'm done with you, Mike Wheeler. You're selfish and a coward and I hate-"

"Guys?"

It's Steve again, and they all whirl round to face him. He's somehow managed to prop himself up against the sofa and is blinking at them confusedly.

"Why you yelling?" He looks entirely pathetic, like a puppet with broken strings and a deformed face. "S hurting my head."

"Sorry buddy, they won't shout anymore," Dustin shoots a pointed glare towards Mike and Max. He is pleased to see that they look relatively guilty.

"Why's there so many... Small people?"

"Uhh..." Dustin glances around for inspiration. "You're uh... Babysitting."

"Oh no..." Steve mumbles, seemingly disappointed. He raises his eyes mournfully towards Dustin. "I done a bad job?"

"No buddy, you did a great job," Dustin smiles weakly. "You just had a little accident, but here, we're patching you up now."

He reaches a hand out, beckoning to Mike who hands him a couple of multicoloured plasters.

"Really dude?"

"They were all I could find!" Mike raises his hands defensively.

"Come here and help then," Dustin sighs, feeling world-weary and exceptionally bored of being the responsible one. Mike trundles over.

"What do I do?"

"Stick it on his face, idiot."

"Where?"

To be fair, Dustin concedes, he had a point. Steve's face is a patchwork of cuts and bruises and blood - it's impossible to know where to prioritise. His eyes zone in on a nasty gash above his right eye, still bleeding sluggishly.

"There," he points.

"Dude, this plaster won't cover that."

They try anyway though, ignoring Steve's winces everytime they near his face.

"Small Wheel'r..." Steve states after a while. "Bro... Nance's 'lil bro?"

Mike looks up, seemingly exasperated, but plays along. "Yes?"

"D'you hate me?"

Mike looks at Steve as though he's grown another head. "Why would I hate you?"

Steve shrugs painfully. "Nan'y hates me... Though' you migh' too."

Dustin watches as Mike's skeptical face grows marginally softer. "Nancy doesn't hate you, man. She's always talking about you."

Steve gives a small noise of discontent. "No... Sh' likes Jon'thon."

Mike glances awkwardly at Dustin, who makes a helpless face. They are ill-equipped for dealing with an injured Steve Harrington, let alone an emotional and unfiltered Steve Harrington.

"Who's tha'?" Steve points suddenly towards the still body of Billy Hargrove. Dustin sighs again; yet another question with a complicated answer.

"That's Billy, Max's brother," he answers, ready for twenty more

questions to follow, but to his surprise, Steve just nods at that. Just as Dustin thinks they've gotten away with a surprisingly unstressful two minutes, Steve, without warning, throws up all over himself.

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"I'm sorry."

Max, whose head is in the fridge as she digs around for something cold enough to ease the Steve's swelling, startles at the voice and bangs her forehead on the middle shelf. Swearing, she ungracefully extracts herself and turns around to face Mike Wheeler.

"What?"

"I... I'm sorry," it does look as though the apology pains Mike, but to his credit, he holds eye contact throughout. "What I said about it being your fault - that wasn't true."

"Too right it wasn't," Max fires back, defensive without even knowing why. "You were an asshole."

I know," Mike says, "I'm sorry. I know it's not an excuse but I just - I'm really worried about El. It's making me feel crazy. It's nobody's fault, but all I can think about is helping her... Can you understand that?"

A brief image flashes through Max's mind of Lucas, cornered by demodogs, cornered by Billy, and she feels sick.

She banishes the images with an inward shudder, looking squarely at Mike. "I guess so."

Mike appears relieved and holds out his hand to her. "Sorry for being a dipshit."

Max accepts the handshake with a quirk of ehr lip. "Apology accepted. Dipshit."

The moment is broken by Dustin, yelling from the other room, "Max, hurry the hell up would you?"

Max rolls her eyes and Mike grins, but it's only a second before his smile is replaced with an anxious frown. "What are we gonna do?"

"About Steve?"

Yeah."

"Well, you can't leave people with head injuries alone," Max states matter-of-factly. "So we only really have two options - stay here with him or take him with us."

"Steve didn't even want us going to help El - maybe it's better that he's..." Mike breaks off, lowering his voice and glancing over his shoulder furtively. "Maybe it's better if he stays behind."

Max ponders this. She still doesn't know where her loyalties lie when it comes to these strange boys, but she knows she feels bad for Mike. If she was in his position she would be terrified. She wants to help this El girl as well, doesn't want her to die at least, because Lucas and Dustin seem to like El and she doesn't want them to be sad. Maybe if she helps El out with this, they might even become friends. It'd be nice to hang out with a girl.

"Dustin could stay with him," Max volunteers.

Mike throws her a relieved smile and it makes her feel better.

"Yeah, that would work! And what do we do about, uh..." Mike pauses then, looking at Max with an odd expression she can't quite figure out, possibly a combination of guilt and pity. "What do we do about your brother?"

"He's not my brother," Max says automatically, even though that isn't the point.

"You know what I mean."

"I don't give a crap," Max spits, suddenly defensive. "Leave him to rot for all I care. Dump him in the garden. Set him on fire. Cut off his-"

"Okay!" Mike interrupts hastily. "We'll ask the others."

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Lucas is close enough that he can see the sweat sticking Steve's long hair to his forehead, see the minute tremors of his form as he trembles. Dustin is pushing his hair back in a manner that would seem almost gentle if anyone else were performing it.

Lucas feels kind of ill because Steve looks bad, looks weaker than any popular, senior, jackass basketball player should ever look, and he knows it's all his fault. He wonders if Steve dies if everyone will exile him from the group, because Steve is Nancy's boyfriend and Nancy is Mike's sister and they all know Mike is the party leader even though it's supposed to be a democracy.

Lucas is brought out of his thoughts abruptly as Mike and Max return from the kitchen, and his anxiety increases as he sees them. Not because of that, ew gross, he doesn't even like Max and she'd never go for Mike Wheeler anyway, but because they both look shifty, glancing at each other as though they'd planned something.

"What took you guys so long?" Dustin barely glances up from where he is busily dabbing at Steve's face with a flannel.

A silence follows the question; Lucas sits back and watches Mike's face flicker through a myriad of expressions, glancing to Max in support, before settling for a well-articulated, "We... Uhh... We just-"

"We think you should stay here and look after Steve, Dustin, whilst we go and help El."

It comes out of Max's mouth in a fast-paced string of garble. Lucas winces as he watches Dustin's face shift from confusion to hurt.

"What?"

Mike has the grace to look guilty at least, shrugging his shoulders and looking at a spot directly to the left of Dustin's head. "I mean, it just seems to make sense."

Dustin, caught between genuine upset and mounting anger, just stares at Mike.

"I can't believe this."

"Dustin... Come on, man-"

"What about never leaving a party member behind? Huh? Did you forget about that, Mike? Or does it only count for Eleven?" Dustin's face is getting red, the way it only does when he's really riled up with all emotions bubbling at the surface. "Steve saved us, he put his ass on the line for us, got beat within an inch of his life and you want to leave him?!"

"It'd be safer for him here-"

"Oh yeah, much safer with Billy Hargrove right there, ready for round two of beating Steve to death."

That makes them all pause.

"Billy won't hurt Steve again," Max says, but she sounds unsure. "He promised."

Dustin scoffs. "Yeah, real naive, Max."

Max bristles and Mike puts a hand on her arm. Lucas doesn't know why this bothers him, so he swallows and looks away.

Dustin sighs and stands up, taking a few steps towards them. "Look, dude, I'm sorry," he looks imploringly at Mike, his eyes huge and earnest. "I want to help El too, I really do, I love her as well y'know... In a friend way, obviously." He adds quickly.

"Then you understand-"

"Yeah, man, I do," Dustin nods seriously. "I also think Steve can help us."

Mike opens his mouth to protest but Dustin is already a step ahead of him.

"Look man, hear me out - we take Steve with us and if he's awake he helps us help El. You gotta admit he's smart and brave and he's saved us before..."

"Alright, we get it, you fancy Steve," Mike snorts and Dustin flames red, punching him in the arm.

"Shut up, Mike! You know what I mean."

"Yeah, man, I get you," Mike relents, although the smirk remains.

"Not to ruin the moment, man, but Steve doesn't look like he's gonna be fighting any demodogs anytime soon," Lucas points out mildly. He's been watching Steve drop in and out of consciousness for the past few minutes. "Dude doesn't seem to know what planet he's on."

"Well, if he's still out for the count when we get there we can just leave him snoozing in the car," Dustin says unconcernedly.

"You sure that's safe?"

"Safer than leaving him with psycho-nuts over here, that's for sure."

"Wait," a thought occurs to Lucas suddenly, so obvious he pauses, confused that it had taken them so long to think of. "How the hell are we gonna get there? Steve can't drive us anymore."

"Shit."

"Guys, chill, I can drive."

"Oh thank Go- wait what?"

Lucas stares at Max - he can feel his eyes bogging out of his head, knows he looks stupid, but, man, he didn't think Max could get any cooler and here she is saving the day again with her apparently never-ending skill set.

Max shrugs unconcernedly. "Yeah, a couple years ago my - I got taught to drive - it's only the basics really but I'll be able to get us there."

"But that's illegal!" Lucas can't help but exclaim. Max quirks an eyebrow at him and he looks away, blushing.

"Max, are you sure you can do this?"

"Of course," Max says confidently.

"He's gonna hit the roof though..." Lucas gestures towards Steve with his foot. "There's no way he'll be chill with Max driving."

"That's true," Mike agrees. "If he put up a fuss he'll slow us down."

"Guys!" Dustin says indignantly. "I promise you he'll be chill. I know him better than any of you. He won't care."

Lucas opens his mouth to say that Steve appeared to have strong and definitely not-chill opinions about them leaving earlier, but decides against it. He doesn't want Max thinking he's not as down for this as everyone else.

"Are you sure, Dustin?"

"Totally."

"To'ally," echos a slurred voice, and they turned to see Steve smiling blearily at them, his eyes crossing slightly.

"Either way," Dustin shrugs, looking amused, "it's not like he's in any condition to stop us."

They all laugh and everything is finally calm - at least for a few minutes until Steve starts babbling like he's drunk a ton of alcohol. He appears sloshed out of his mind, and Lucas starts questioning again if Billy delivered one too many hits and actually damaged Steve's brain.

"Guys," Steve mumbles, beckoning them in with a crooked finger and a failed wink. "Guys... Have you ever been in love?"

Lucas exchanges an awkward look with Dustin. Neither of them are prepared to start confessing their feelings left, right and centre to a heavily concussed Steve Harrington. They shake their heads.

"Good," Steve looks appeased and continues rambling. "Good. Don't ever fuckin' do that. Sorry, Jesus, I shouldn' swear in fronta kids, fuck. I'm sorry 'm a bit useless at this, Christ, my head hurts, does anyone have aspirin?"

Sweat beads on Steve's brow and he tries to raise his head. Curses again when he can barely lift it off the ground.

"Whaddafuck is happenin', why's my head feeling like there's a fuckin' house on it?"

"I don't think he's up to helping us guys, maybe we should just drop him at his house-"

Suddenly Steve is panicking, somehow managing to force himself into a half-sitting position, hands flailing as he tries to grab on to the closest person to him.

"No, please, don't take me home!" His voice, so unlike the Steve Harrington they all know, comes out almost as a wail. "I don' wanna go home, I hate it there, shit, I'll be alone again, I don't wanna - Dustin, please, fuck, please let me stay with you, there's no one for me at home and I don't- I'll let you do anything I promise, I won't be an asshole, I just hate it-"

"Shh, buddy," Dustin is rubbing Steve's back, looking bewildered. "You're staying with us, it's fine, it was just an idea, just chill out okay? Max is gonna shut up now."

"Sorry," Max says.

"Don' be sorry, I just don' like it," Steve gesticulates wildly, twisting out of Dustin's grasp. "Y'know guys? You guys understand right... Friends are family. Family are assholes and friends are better than family always, you lot get that. Oth'rwise," he chuckles a little bit at himself, "oth'rwise you wouldn' be here all messed up an' scared, you'd be tucked up in bed like good li'l shitbags. Righ'? Righ', shitbags?"

He grins at them dazedly, a trickle of blood running from his mouth. Lucas grimaces, but nods all the same.

"Yeah, man," he says, because he feels like he has to say something. "You're right."

"Bro's come first," Dustin agrees, then pauses and looks unsurely at Max. "And... Sisters too?"

Max rolls her eyes. "Sure, dickhead."

"Dickhead," Steve repeats cheerfully.

"Ready to get in the car, dickhead?" Mike nudges Steve carefully.

"Wai'..." Steve looks up at them concernedly. "I don't think I can drive..."

"I'm sure we'll figure something out."